

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 9, 2022

The Honorable Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Kevin Shea
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Administrator Shea:

We appreciate your continued engagement with the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus to discuss animal welfare and the enforcement of our foundational animal welfare laws.

We again write to you with continued concern regarding complaints made against facilities that are subject to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspections but face serious allegations that they are not in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) or its regulations.

At the time of this letter, serious allegations have been leveled against Elon Musk's company Neuralink, which tests its products on animals including monkeys, sheep, pigs, and rats. According to a recent report from Reuters, more than 20 Neuralink employees as well as investigators from the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine have cited complaints which are now the subject of a formal probe by the USDA's Office of Inspector General. These complaints include graphic descriptions of botched experiments and unnecessary animal suffering and death, reportedly as a result of pressure from Mr. Musk to irresponsibly accelerate development of the company's products at the expense of animal safety. The AWA, which the USDA is responsible for enforcing, plainly requires a certain standard of care with regard to animals at research facilities – including that pain and distress be minimized and alternatives to animal testing be considered.

Your Agency, specifically the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, has not issued any citations against Neuralink, however the treatment of the animals described in these complaints seems to indicate a distressing lack of oversight. We are very concerned that this may be another example of high-profile cases of animal cruelty involving USDA inspected facilities, referenced in previous letters to your Agency, where there has not been adequate action from USDA. The Inspector General's investigation is vital to shedding light on the unnecessary animal suffering and deaths Neuralink's work may be causing, and whether violations of any Animal Welfare Act standards went unreported or overlooked.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to staying apprised of the status and progress of the Inspector General's probe.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



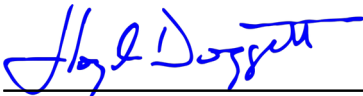
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress




Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



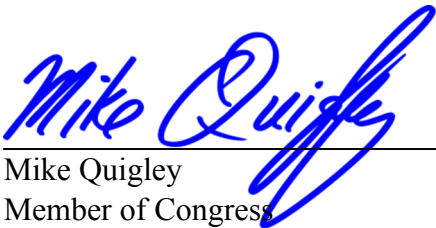
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Cynthia Axne
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



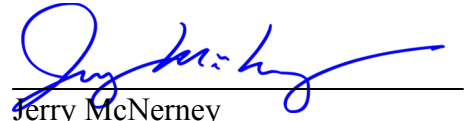
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



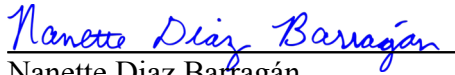
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Cárdenas".

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jerry McNerney".

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nanette Diaz Barragán".

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Lee".

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Cohen".

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress